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Would Rather Close, Plant Official Says

By Anne Hazard
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

The president of a chemical waste disposal plant just outside Richmond has told state officials that he would rather close the facility than make costly site improvements required by a certificate issued to the facility in October.

State Water Control Board officials said yesterday that the firm has missed a December deadline for submitting the design for improvements to contain runoff that officials fear might contaminate the pond water or the nearby Chickahominy River.

Water board officials say the firm, Liquid Waste Disposal Inc., which operates an 18,000-gallon storage tank and incinerator in Hanover County, is the only chemical waste disposal facility in eastern Virginia.

Requirements for site improvements are the result of a small spill in April of what appeared to be red ink solvent.

The firm has never been routinely inspected by the state Health Department or, until April, by the water board, and it apparently has never been required to report to the state what materials it is handling.

According to Eugene T. Rilee Jr., the firm has incinerated several million gallons of industrial waste in the past eight years.

It is unknown if any of the flammable industrial waste handled by the firm was toxic.

The facility is located off Richford Road, within 15 feet of an unnamed tributary of the Chickahominy River and about a mile from the river.

Rilee wrote a letter to the water board saying that he would rather close than meet requirements outlined in the certificate issued Oct. 26, water board engineer Michael Gregory said yesterday.

Rilee was unavailable for comment last night.

Gregory said the next step will be for state officials to confer on the matter. "We'll just have to get together and see if [Rilee] plans to meet the requirements or close," Gregory said.

The certificate also required that Liquid Waste Disposal Inc. begin submitting monthly reports of what substances it was handling. But the firm has not yet done this, Gregory said.

He said the reports should begin this month. They were not

required in November and December, he said, because the certificate specified no date for when they should begin.

Gregory said he had just assumed the firm would begin submitting reports when it submitted the designs which have not been received.

"A date probably should have been put in the certificate," Gregory said. "It was an oversight."

Gregory has said that the water board became aware of Liquid Waste Disposal Inc. only two years ago.

Another requirement of the certificate was submission of a plan for treating or disposing of runoff such as rain — a plan required under a water board program which has been in effect since 1971 for industries

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Closing Preferred, Official Asserts

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such as Liquid Waste Disposal Inc. that do not discharge into state waters.

Last summer, Rilee described as very costly and "absurd" the requirement of the certificate that the surface under the facility be sealed to prevent seepage into ground water.

A dike that has been started would have to be raised to a level ensuring containment of a "100-year flood" under terms of the certificate, and the ground under the tank and incinerator would have to be sealed with a

liner of material such as concrete, asphalt, clay or fabric.

Although the design for these improvements should have been received by the water board by Dec. 26, the firm still has a grace period, Gregory said. The length is determined on a case by case basis, he said.

The maximum grace period is about 14 days, after which a letter would be sent with a final request for either the designs or confirmation that the firm is closing, Gregory said.

After that, the water board may take legal action against the firm, he said.

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